

*An earnest EXHORTATION to young
lately CONFIRMED:*

IN A
S E R M O N

ON PROVERBS XXIII. 19.

Preached after the

PRIMARY VISITATION
OF
JOHN, Lord Bishop of DURHAM.

By WILLIAM NOWELL, A.M.
Rector of WOLSINGHAM.

A N E W E D I T I O N.

ACTS VII. 14.

But when the Apostles, which were in *Jerusalem*, heard that *Samaria* had received the word of GOD, they sent unto them *Peter* and *John*; who coming down prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost, (for as yet he had fallen upon none of them, only they had been baptized in the name of the LORD JESUS;) then they put their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

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PROVERBS XXII. 19.

*Hear thou, my son, and be wise; and guide thou
thine heart in the way.*

“**V**AIN man, says Zophar to Job, would be
“ wife, though man be born like a wild ass’s
“ colt!”—There is a mixture of truth and
satire in this reflection, which alludes both to the in-
firmity and folly of human nature. It is true, there
is in us an ambition to attain knowledge, and yet
here it is charged as a piece of foolish presumption in
such a creature as man to endeavour after it. Not
the wildest inhabitant of the desert brings its offspring
into the world in a more helpless or more ignorant
state than the children of men are foisted in at their
birth: And hence, all pretensions to knowledge may
seem ridiculous from such mean beginnings. He
therefore ascribes our passion for wisdom, to the mere
vanity of our hearts.—“Vain man would be wise.”
As if he had said, “What hast thou to do with wis-
dom, thou child of ignorance? Thou that wast
“ born yesterday, and must die to-morrow; whose
“ life is but a span long, and yet begins in the folly
“ of childhood, and terminates in the no less folly
“ of old age, thy second childhood! In the mean
“ time thy faculties open by slow degrees, and thy
“ understanding proceeds toward truth with painful
“ steps—Line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept.”

“*precept, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little,*” are the “*tedious methods by which the natural darkness of thy mind is in any measure enlightened. What arrogance then, what vanity is this, that thou shouldest set thyself to seek after wisdom, or lift up thy voice for understanding?*”

And very just is this rebuke, when applied to many who aspired to the title of *wise men* among the ancients, in whom *vanity* appears to have been the predominant and ruling passion: As * one of the most eminent amongst them acknowledges of his brethren; “*They,*” says he, among the philosophers who have written “*books on wisdom, have done it out of a spirit of vanity; and even where they decry vain-glory, they are thereby, and in the very same books, labouring to advance their own glory.*” On these, therefore, the pointed satire falls with its keenest edge. *Vain men!*—And again, when men in pursuit of wisdom know no bounds, but mix heaven and earth, this world and the next, and presume within the narrow circle of human understanding, to inclose the infinite attributes of the incomprehensible God, and *so find out the Almighty unto perfection*; when they will needs scan all the ways of providence, and measure all God’s doings by the standard of their own weak and feeble judgments; boldly condemning whatever does not lie level to their low apprehensions; when, in short, they will dispute God’s ways, but not believe his word; and deny those dispensations which are too deep for the short line of their reason to fathom—This is a *vanity* justly to be derided and exploded.

And yet, notwithstanding these severe checks, which may serve to humble our pride, a wisdom nevertheless there is, which is not only within our reach, but which it is our most bounden duty to labour after, and to attain. The whole book of *Proverbs*

verbs is, as it were, a system of this wisdom, taught to the sons of men by no less a person than King Solomon himself, so eminent for his superior wisdom. In the beginning of the work, he introduces his undertaking with the noblest encomium of the wisdom he would recommend. "Happy, says he, is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding; for the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour: Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Of this wisdom we cannot be too ambitious: to the study of it Solomon presses and encourages us by the most inviting motives: He declares it the only way to give subtilty to the simple, to the young, men knowledge and discretion: It shall be an ornament of grace, says he, unto thy head, and chains about thy neck: And, therefore, as he urges in the next verse, "Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thou thine heart in the way."

In pursuance of this call to wisdom, so affectionately addressed to us, by the inspired instructor, it shall be my endeavour in this discourse, to invite the younger part of this assembly to listen to his admonitions, which may so seasonably fall in with the serious resolutions just made by many of them, at their late confirmation by the Bishop.

Now, the wisdom thus extolled, and of which such excellent things are spoken, is not a skill in abstruse arts and sciences, of which but few are capable or have opportunities of studying, or are very nearly interested in; but it is a wisdom within every one's reach, and which it concerns you above all things else to possess yourselves of. Solomon himself

describes its nature in a few words, and tells you where it consists: "The fear of God, says he, is the beginning of wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." And elsewhere, "let us, says he, hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

The fear of God therefore, is what *Solomon* means, by wisdom; and by the fear of God, you are to understand nothing less than religion in general, so called, because the fear of God is not only itself a principal part of true religion, but also, because where this principle, a true fear of God, rules in the heart, it will lead to the exercise of all other parts of true religion.

You are called then, and invited in my text, to a diligent regard to religion, as the most valuable wisdom, as the guide of your youth, and your surest director through all the mazes of the world you are entering into. I heartily wish it was in the power of my words I can use to persuade you to it. I shall attempt no other method for this purpose here in public, than that in which I have already spoken to most of you in private: viz.

First, To remind you of your baptismal vow and engagement, with a short explanation of the parts of it: And then,

Secondly, Inculcate the performance of it, from your own voluntary promise, now made by you before the Bishop.

Thirdly, Concluding with a few rules of advice, that may be of service for your direction therein.

First, At the time of your baptism, you were infants, incapable of judging or acting for yourselves; but not therefore incapable of being entered into covenant with God, as is evident from hence, that

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under the law, God received the children of the Jews into covenant at eight days old, as he had done the descendants of *Abraham* before the law, by the ordinance of circumcision: And as baptism in the Gospel succeeds circumcision under the Law, and our Saviour has no where forbidden children to partake of it, but on the contrary, commanded us "to suffer the little children to come unto him," it is your Christian birth-right to be baptized as soon as conveniently may be, after you are born; and by that sacrament, to be admitted into covenant with God Almighty, on the terms of the Gospel.

Now, in all covenants, each contracting party lays himself under an obligation to perform something towards the other: In the Christian covenant, God Almighty stipulates and agrees to accept you as *members of Christ, as children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven*: *Members of Christ*, means members of his church, which is his body, and partakers of all the privileges belonging to it: *Children of God*, in opposition to *children of wrath*, in which every son and daughter of *Adam* is born through his original sin: And *inheritors of the kingdom of God*, through the merits of *JESUS CHRIST*, who has purchased that eternal salvation for us.

These are the privileges all baptized Christians are by covenant entitled to, and privileges certainly they are, the most advantageous and honourable to human nature: They contain all that is requisite to produce and nourish a principle of holiness within us: They insure to us the blessings of the Christian redemption: They put us, as it were, into God's family, and engage his fatherly care and protection, his unbounded love and kindness for us, in our passage through this mortal life; and when that shall be over, they open to us an entrance into a never failing state of glory and happiness, in his own divine presence. And, what

is there that you can think of or desire, in comparison of these advantages?

On the other hand it was promised for you, that in consideration of these high privileges, you should also be bound to the performance of these three things, *viz.*—1st, That you should renounce all manner of wickedness; abhor and abstain from it, whether tempted to it by the suggestions of the devil, allured by the vanities of the world you live in, or seduced by the irregular lust and passions of your own corrupt nature.—2^{dly}, In the next place, that you should with a hearty and lively faith, embrace all the articles of the Christian doctrine; and lastly, That you should shew the truth and sincerity of your faith by your works, in keeping God's holy will and commandments, and walking in the same all the days of your life. This was the agreement made on your part. On the two latter branches of which, I shall be a little more particular, to fix them more deeply in your minds.

And first, of *faith*. The necessary articles of your Christian faith are summed up in the *Creed*, or what you call the *Belief*. You believe them, because they are taught in the holy scriptures by CHRIST, and his Apostles, who could neither be deceived themselves, nor teach you any thing but what is both true, and of great importance for you to believe: The sum and substance of your belief is comprized in these three particulars. 1. That you believe in one God, the Maker of heaven and earth; and though, because he is a spirit, you do not see this glorious Being with your bodily eyes, yet he is not only revealed to your faith in the volume of the scriptures, but displays himself to your understanding through all the volume of nature. Every thing about you, the sun, the moon, and the stars, the earth and all its productions for use and ornament, every animal, and every object that

that meets your senses, testify not only to the being, but to the providence of an all-wise, all-powerful, beneficent Creator and Disposer of all things. You can give no other account of your own original and continuance in life; nor of any of the comforts and conveniencies you enjoy; but to ascribe them to his liberal and gracious hand, who made us all, and filleth all things living with plenteousness. But because even Heathen nations believe in a Creator of the world, to distinguish yourselves as Christians, your next article is to believe in JESUS CHRIST; "God the Son, who redeemed you and all mankind." The particulars of whose birth, life, preaching, miracles, death, resurrection, ascension and intercession, all most wonderful! you ought to acquaint yourselves most exactly withal, by a constant and careful reading of the New Testament, of which I was greatly concerned to see how ignorant many of you were upon examination. The third article of your christian faith, is to believe in the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth you, "and all the elect people of God;" that is, all christian people. That he is the author of all holiness in you, and that without his special grace assisting, it is not in your power to move and advance in the ways of piety and religion.

Thus you see, every time you repeat the creed, (which perhaps you do often, without thinking or attending to the sense and meaning of it) you profess your faith in the holy Trinity, three persons in the one Godhead, according to the command of our blessed LORD to his disciples, "Go ye into all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

To these great and main articles are further subjoined, your acknowledgment of "the holy Catholic church," and "the communion of saints;" that is, an affectionate relation and fellowship ever subsisting between all true christians amongst them-

elves, and with CHRIST their head, "the forgiveness of sins," viz.—through the merits of CHRIST on your true repentance: "The resurrection" of our bodies out of the grave, at the last day, and their re-union with our souls, in order to enter upon what is the last article of your belief, a "life everlasting." Here you see, life is not everlasting, but of very short and uncertain continuance: You see old persons drop into the grave through mere weakness of nature, and the strong and middle-aged often cut off in their full strength and vigour; and even many of those who, like yourselves, were young and lively, and standing as it were on the threshold or entrance of life, yet like early bloom nipped with an untimely blast, suddenly fading away before they come to be full blown: So that there is no reliance upon this life, at any stage or period of it. But then, your christian belief assures you of a better and more enduring life to come; and that though you die to this world, it is to live in another; the good and virtuous, in unspeakable joys; the bad and vicious, in intolerable torments, for evermore.

These are the tenets of christian doctrine, which it was engaged you should embrace and profess, when you were by baptism admitted into the communion of the church, and into covenant with God. I have but a little varied the expressions of them, that you may attend more to the sense of them, than perhaps you do when you repeat them always in the very same form of words.

The next thing promised for you was, that you should lead lives suitable to these holy doctrines, by "keeping God's holy will and commandments, and walking in the same all the days of your life." And indeed without this, your faith, however sound and sincere it may be supposed to be, will certainly stand you in no stead at the last day of judgment, nay, it will but serve to increase your condemnation. For
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our Saviour has declared, that "not every one that
"saith unto him, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the
"kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of
"his Father, which is in heaven; and that the servant
"who knew his LORD's will and did it not, shall be
"beaten with many stripes."

Now, the commandments which you are to keep are easily known, being the same that God gave to *Moses* in *Mount Sinai*, which are ratified again and improved by our SAVIOUR, as necessary to eternal life. They may be reduced to three, as respecting, 1. GOD; 2. Your neighbour; and 3. Yourself.

1. With respect to GOD, that firmly believing there is such a great and glorious Being, you fear him; that is, live in a constant reverence of his unseen Majesty, knowing that he is ever present with you in private and in public, in darkness as well as in the day-light; that his eye is ever upon you in all places; whatever you are doing, or intend, or think of, he knows it. It is further required, that you love him, which is no more than his excellencies and favours to you demand; and that not negligently or slightly, but with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your strength. God requires your heart and affections, without which he will set no value upon any of your services. *My son*, says he, *give me thine heart*; and being possessed of that, he requires that you express your love to him, "in worshipping him, giving him thanks, putting your
"whole trust in him, in honouring his holy name,
"and his word, and serving him truly all the days
"of your life." Let me here only remind you that this worship of GOD, must be paid by you in public and in private; in public, according to the opportunities offered you, and especially on his own day, set apart for religious uses; in private, you must set times for yourselves, and keep them constantly, taking care especially to begin and end the day with de-

otion; that the outgoings of the morning and evening, may never fail to praise him. And in honouring the name of God, you will by all means refrain from that horrible sin of profane swearing and cursing in your conversation, and it will give you the greatest uneasiness at any time, to hear others guilty of so shocking a crime. His word you will honour by reading it frequently, and attending to it when read or preached as your only sure guide to heaven, and alone capable of *making you wise unto salvation*. You will shew your trust in God, when in all circumstances you resign yourselves to his disposal, and rely only upon his blessing on your honest endeavours, for obtaining the things of this life which you stand in need of.

This is your duty to God, promised in your name at baptism, to be performed not by fits and starts on particular occasions, now and then, but in a regular, uniform course, throughout the tenor of your lives.

The next branch of the commandments respects your neighbour, that is, mankind in general, and how you must demean yourselves towards your fellow-creatures: for instance, you are therein taught to love, honour, and succour your father and mother; and this they certainly deserve at your hands, in return for the pains and cares, and solicitude they have undergone on your account; together with the benefits you derive from their instructions, examples, and provisions, they have supplied in your tender years. You can no otherwise expect duty from your children hereafter, but as you pay it to your parents now. Persons in authority likewise, who are your political parents, this precept commands you to obey in all lawful things, and to reverence their office for the sake of good order and quietness; and also to pay a suitable respect to all those who are placed *over you in the Lord*, your spiritual pastors and teachers, *who watch for your souls*, and admonish you in your christian duty,

duty, and, in general, to behave yourselves in a modest, lowly, and reverent manner towards all your betters, or superiors. But above all, you are by all means to take care to hurt nobody, not even the meanest human creature, though ever so much in your power, or dependent on your favour; but to treat the person, the property, and reputation of every one you are concerned with, with tenderness and humanity. In all your various dealings in the world, your constant and invariable rules must be *truth* and *honesty*; to abhor a lie; and so far from stealing or defrauding, as not to allow yourselves so much as to covet or desire what belongs to another, and which you have no fair means of procuring; trusting for a livelihood to God's blessing on your labours, and fidelity in your station, *loving your neighbour as sincerely as yourselves*, and making this your standing maxim, *to do to all men as you would they should do unto you*.

Lastly, in your personal conduct, you are required to keep your bodies in temperance, sobriety, and chastity, to bridle your passions, and govern your sensual appetites; to be meek and lowly, humble, patient, and resigned; *as strangers and pilgrims to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul*, and by all means in your power, to preserve a becoming order and regularity throughout your whole demeanour.

These are the main of the things undertaken and promised in your name at your baptism: These are the conditions, on which you were entered into covenant with God, and entitled to the invaluable privileges of the christian redemption above-mentioned.

Whether you are determined to stand to this agreement, now you are of age to answer for yourselves? Whether you think the privileges of the gospel, the redemption of your souls, the favour of God, and eternal life, worth obtaining on these terms? You have now been asked, and desired deliberately to consider with yourselves, and then to determine as you should

should see best. Fire and water, life and death, heaven and hell, have been set before you, that you may make your choice, and stretch forth your hands to which liketh you best; that you may not hereafter complain that you have been imposed upon; that you might act in your own persons, with your eyes open, in an affair which so essentially concerns your everlasting welfare. You have been brought into the public assembly, and there in the face of the congregation, the question has been fairly put to you by God's minister, the bishop, in these solemn words:

“Do you here in the presence of God, and of his congregation, renew this solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your baptism, ratifying and confirming the same in your own persons; and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe, and to do all those things which your Godfathers and Godmothers then undertook for you?”

To this question you have all of you given your public assent, by answering every one of you for yourself, I DO. And indeed with the highest reason, as otherwise you forfeit again the privileges of your baptism; you break your covenant with God, but to which now by this open and public assent, you have as it were set your hand and seal.

And from this your own voluntary act and deed, I proceed now in the second place, to inculcate upon you the due discharge of these your most serious engagements, that you may in the end reap the benefit of them to your everlasting comfort.

II. Now as this is a covenant between God and you, you are to consider that a covenant is a solemn thing in its own nature, which no man can violate without reproach. Covenant-breakers are ranked by St. Paul among the most flagrant offenders. If it be but a man's covenant, yet to break it is a sign of a base and treacherous spirit, unworthy any regard or confidence. A covenant-breaker is avoided by all honest men,

men, as an outlaw or reprobate, with whom they will have no communication. But this sacred covenant is still to be more revered, because of the supreme dignity of *Almighty God*, who condescends to be one of the contracting parties. He is not a Being to be trifled with, or with whom we may prevaricate with impunity. What he hath promised, he will most certainly make good, and will no less strictly require faithfulness of those with whom he has to do. With regard to all your solemn promises to God, you must remember the wise man's admonition, "when thou vowest a vow to God, defer not to pay, for he hath no pleasure in fools: Pay that which thou hast vowed." As by fulfilling your religious engagements, you will be entitled to all manner of blessings, so by neglecting, slighting, and breaking them, you will entail upon yourselves all those curses which are denounced in God's law against wicked and disobedient persons. On your keeping this covenant, depends your welfare here in this life, and for ever in another. It is your all that is at stake, the one thing needful, the very end of your being made a reasonable creature; that you might by a life of virtue and holiness, be prepared to enjoy a state of happiness and glory, purchased and provided for you by our blessed Saviour. "Observe therefore and keep it and do it, for this shall be your wisdom and your understanding, in the sight of God and man." But what a shame will it be, with what pain, anguish, and remorse would it fill your hearts, should you ever go back, and fall away from your plighted vows, and turn your steps from the divine testimonies! Oh which of you can be so treacherous as ever to forsake God, who made you, preserves you, hath redeemed and sanctified you, and entered into a covenant of peace and mercy with you, sealed in the blood of his own beloved Son! Oh who can desert the God of their life, who hath promised to bless your going out

and your coming in, to prosper your undertakings, and to deliver you in all dangers and necessities; and as if that was nothing, hath laid up for you a crown of glory, and everlasting joys, at his own right hand in heaven. Think on these things, my dearly beloved young christians, and resolve with God's help to be true to your trust, and to keep yourselves stedfast and unwavering in the covenant you have made. The advantages are all your own. *God Almighty* is no gainer by the contract, which he has made with you only out of his pure love and tender regard for your happiness. Oh then, let your own interest; let your gratitude and repeated promises ever be upon your mind, and prevail with you to answer the expectation of your heavenly Father, which with your own mouths you have now declared to be just and reasonable, and such as in every account you are bound to fulfil.

I press these things upon you with more earnestness at present, because of the very great importance it is of, for you to set out right, now in the beginning of life, before you have contracted evil habits, or sin has taken any deep root in you. Now is the time for you, more especially, to tread with caution, and carefully consider what track of life you enter upon; for probably in the same track you will continue, whether right or wrong, to the end of your lives: And be assured further, that no service is more acceptable to God, than that which we pay him in the unsullied years of youth, with the lively vigour of all our faculties. It is moreover necessary to be thus urgent with you, to take heed to your ways at this critical period, because of the dangers and temptations which will now most likely beset and assault your virtue. The time is now come, when you have taken life upon yourselves, and must begin to act your part in a world full of snares and enticements. The corruption of your own nature, and even the vivacity of youth, will incline you too easily to listen to those fatal

tal allurements, which vice (under the false appearance of pleasure) will solicit you to comply with; and to encourage any ill dispositions, and embolden you to indulge them, there will not be wanting too many bad examples, who will take a malicious pleasure in corrupting your innocence, and drawing you along with them into lawless excesses. And, besides all those adversaries to goodness, there is moreover a subtil infernal spirit, who knows your weakest, most unguarded quarter, and ever lieth in wait to deceive and to destroy. On all these accounts, you have need of your utmost caution and vigilance, and the firmest resolution too, to stand your ground unshaken, and to maintain your post in your christian station, in the midst of so many and great dangers.

Nay, insufficient after all, and altogether vain, will all your own endeavours prove, unless seconded and promoted, and made effectual by the all-powerful aids of divine grace; a further measure of which, it is hoped, is derived upon you at your confirmation: For then the bishop earnestly and devoutly prayed to God on your behalf, and beseeched him in those affecting words, "That he would strengthen you with the Holy Ghost the comforter, and daily increase in you his manifold gifts and graces; the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness, and fill you with the spirit of his holy fear, now and ever; that you might continue children of God, increasing daily more and more in goodness until you come to his everlasting kingdom." These are pious and excellent prayers in your behalf, and add a new obligation to your religious covenant, to which the Holy Ghost is thus made a party, engaging to supply all needful grace and assistance to those who in earnest desire to fulfil it.

You can never then desert a charge, in which you have so powerful an auxiliary joined with you: but with constant

stant care and hearty endeavours, you will be sure to work out your salvation, since it is God that worketh in you, and with you, to will and to do of his good pleasure.

I Chron. xxviii. 8. Now therefore, to use the words of King David; "In the sight of all Israel, the congregation of the LORD, and in the audience of our God, I charge you to keep and seek for all the commandments of the LORD your God, that it may be well with you, and your children after you for ever. Know ye, therefore, the God of your fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind; for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if you forsake him, he will cast you off for ever."

III. For your farther assistance, in maintaining your religious resolution, it remains now, that I conclude with a few short rules of caution and advice.

1st, In the first place it will be of great use, frequently to review your baptismal covenant, and recollect what it is that you have so solemnly and deliberately undertaken to fulfil. The three things promised for you, and which you have now promised for yourselves, should often be brought to remembrance. Compare your manners and way of life with them, and see how they agree together. Let them be the rule of your conduct by which you are to walk, and not the way of the world, or the examples of the multitude. What is it to me, may you say to yourselves, how others live, or what dangerous liberties they take, what vanities they pursue, what excesses they indulge: Their sins will not excuse mine, nor is their course of life a pattern for mine. I have bound myself to God, to renounce all wickedness, to hold fast the christian faith, and to walk in God's commandments. I am a soldier of JESUS CHRIST, the captain of my salvation, and am engaged to serve under his banner, in all vir-
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tuous and godly living; “ not to be conformed to
 “ this world or its wicked customs, but to be trans-
 “ formed in the renewing of my mind, that I may
 “ prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect
 “ will of GOD.”

2dly, Shun an idle and slothful habit, which is not only itself a great sin, but exposes you to all other sins. The slothful are odious in the sight of GOD and man; they consume that for which others labour; they squander away that precious time which is allotted them for the most valuable purposes. They abuse the talents GOD has given them, and let them rust for want of exercise. They are always in the way of temptation, and ready to fall in with any dissolute companion that calls upon them. Having nothing to do, they are ever prone to do evil. Whilst, on the contrary, honest industry and diligence in some good employment, is not only healthful, pleasant, and profitable for this world, but keeps the mind too busy to be at leisure to listen to the calls of vice and wickedness. Industry GOD has in his wisdom made generally necessary for obtaining a temporal livelihood, for getting the meat that perisheth, and it is no less necessary for securing that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.

3dly, Be very cautious what company you keep: Particularly allow yourselves no familiarity with persons of a loose and profane disposition, who make a mock of religion, and glory in being above all the restraints it lays men under: What will shock you at first in their loose talk, will by frequent use, appear less and less horrible; and if you do not fly from such pestilential conversation, it is much if you are not in the end infected with it. You may as well hope to handle pitch without being defiled, as keep wicked company and preserve your own innocence. But endeavour to associate yourselves with the virtuous and religious, from whom you will be always learning something good; their examples will confirm your good purposes,

purposes, and raise an honourable emulation in running your christian race; for *Solomon* observes, "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man, and especially if a good man, his friend."

4thly, Abstain particularly, I beseech you, as you grow up, from that most dangerous and destructive of all vices, drunkenness. At present you are too young to be sensible perhaps of the charms of the bewitching cup; but you are not too young to observe the mischiefs it has brought on those who have been allured by them: Their health destroyed, their affairs distressed, their understandings impaired, all sense of religion extinguished; besides, an innumerable train of vices, to which in their sober moments they would have no temptation, are the common effects of intemperate drinking. If you yield to this one temptation, all that I have said will be of no use to you. You will disregard the best advice of your nearest friends, and indeed become incapable of putting it in practice. You must be sober, if you mean to be serious; and that one post manfully defended, you will be always upon your guard to repel your adversaries from every quarter.

5thly, Let me here repeat another particular mentioned above, as part of our duty to God; that is, never venture to take his holy name in vain. The frequency of this horrible sin, makes it necessary to guard you against it with the strictest care now, before you have been guilty of it; for abominable and unnatural as it is, unpleasant and unprofitable too, yet where this impious and shameful habit has been once contracted, it is but seldom seen to be reformed. They that have been long used to swearing, become insensible when they swear: They lose the horror of so dreadful a crime, and almost persuade themselves it is no crime at all. But hear you, my children, God rather than them, who has declared himself a jealous God, and will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain; and follow not the custom of wicked

ed reprobates, but the direction of our blessed SAVIOUR, who says, "Swear not at all in your ordinary conversation; but let your communication be yea yea, and nay nay; for whatsoever is more than this, cometh of evil, or of the evil one." Speak the truth always, and then you will have no occasion for oaths to give credit to what you say, which in reality they seldom do.

6thly, That you may keep in the right way to heaven, take the word of GOD for your guide, read it by day, and meditate by night. Let no day, if you can help it, pass without tincturing your minds with some of the divine wisdom it contains. It is the spiritual food that keeps alive a sense of religion within you. It will raise in your hearts the most awful apprehensions of his great Majesty; it will display before your eyes the mercies of your redemption through CHRIST, and kindle your affections to heavenly things. The holy patterns, and exemplary lives of pious persons you there meet with, cannot fail to awaken a spirit of zeal and emulation in your breasts, and incline you to go and do likewise. Be it then yours, as it was the praise of young *Timothy*, that "from children you knew the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation."

7thly, I shall conclude all with exhorting you to the constant use of the two great instruments of holiness or means of grace, viz. *Prayer* and the *sacrament* of the LORD's supper.

Prayer is a correspondence between GOD and your souls. It is the way of conversing with the Father of spirits, the author of "every good and perfect gift." Every morning when you awake to a new life, never fail to praise him by whom you live, and to implore his blessing upon you through the ensuing day; every evening, venture not into the helpless state of sleep, so nearly resembling death, till you have first made your peace with GOD, and commended yourselves de-

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youthly to his guardianship, who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth.

On solemn days, resort with cheerfulness and alacrity to the public assemblies of the faithful, then to join with your fellow christians in the service of the sanctuary; and be sure to behave yourselves attentively and devoutly, to improve your hearts with what you hear, to renew your resolutions of a christian life, to gain new supplies of grace, and particularly to refresh your souls, when it is administered with the representative body and blood of CHRIST, our SAVIOUR, in the holy eucharist,—or LORD's supper.

8thly, To that most solemn act of christian worship, it is the direction of our church, that “no persons shall be admitted till they have been confirmed, or are desirous of being confirmed.” You have now qualified yourselves in that respect, for approaching the table of the LORD: You are now entitled to that high privilege: And as it is the principal means of grace, appointed by our blessed SAVIOUR himself, for strengthening and refreshing our souls with all spiritual aid and comfort, and deriving upon us the inestimable benefits of his meritorious death and passion, which it represents before us: On these accounts, the necessity of your condition must needs urge you to prepare yourselves without delay, that you may be initiated into the number of faithful and constant communicants. I would press no one to this solemn duty, till they are capable of duly considering it, and coming to it with a right understanding, as well as pious affections: But when you have attained a competent knowledge of this sacred ordinance, which must now be your serious endeavour, you are by no means to neglect it, both because you stand in immediate need of the grace it supplies, and because delays only produce delays, and so you may fall into a general dissipation, even total neglect of so essential a part of your christian duty. This, it must be lamented, is too common

common a case, and leads to coldness and indifference about all religion. But begin early, my young christians, and you will then be likely to hold on, and continue in the good way, walking in this, and all the commandments and ordinances of the LORD blameless. Begin now, whilst your hearts are yet tender, and apt to receive the happy impressions of religion. You will begin with much advantage, whilst you have yet the pious examples of your parents and friends set before your eyes, to encourage and direct your good beginnings.

Thus initiated, you will go on from strength to strength, adding grace to grace, improving day by day in all virtue and godliness of living, forgetting those things which are behind, and stretching forward to those things which are before. You will by GOD's help continue to advance in piety, as you advance in years; your good principles having taken root downward, will bear fruit upward, and though your growth, like that of a tree, may not be so sudden as to be immediately perceptible to the eye, yet sure, though slow, it will be always increasing; and at length lift its top to heaven: Encouraging and provoking one another to love, and to all good works, as those who set out together in the christian race, "until you all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of GOD, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of CHRIST;" and be found "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

This is the wisdom which is from above, these its rules and directions; the wisdom which will never be found *vain*, the true wisdom of man, his greatest ornament and highest perfection, open to all, and of easy attainment: The pleasure, the honour, the advantage accompanying it, will highly reward your application to it. Adorned with its graces, you will appear amiable in the eyes of men; you will have a
never

never failing spring of satisfaction within your own breast; and, above all, will be approved of by your Father, which is in heaven: You will resemble the pattern of our blessed SAVIOUR himself, who grew in this wisdom as in stature, and in favour with GOD and man; and through his merits and mediation, will at last be admitted into those mansions of bliss, whither he is gone before to prepare a place for you.

To him, therefore, brethren, I now most heartily commend you, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified by faith, which is in CHRIST JESUS: To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, three persons, but one GOD, be ascribed all honour, adoration, and praise, for ever and ever.

F I N I S.



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